

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KUWAIT 01384 01 OF 02 151625Z

ACTION CU-03

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SS-15 NSC-05

CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 L-03 AID-05 /051 W

-----151704Z 041756 /43

P R 151540Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7508

INFO USIA WASHDC

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 KUWAIT 1384

STATE FOR CU/NEA; NEA/ARP

USIA FOR INA

E.O. 11652: N/A

SUBJECT: U.S. RELATIONS WITH KUWAIT UNIVERSITY UNDER FIRE

SUMMARY: ON MARCH QR THREE ARABIC DAILIES IN KUWAIT CARRIED STORIES ABOUT A "SENSATIONAL" DISCLOSURE LINKING FORMER SECRETARY OF STATE KISSINGER AND THE AMERICAN EMBASSY TO DEVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO "AMERICANIZE" KUWAIT UNIVERSITY. NEWSPAPER STORIES WERE BASED ON ACCUSATIONS MADE BY STUDENT LEADER MUTLAQ MUSA(ED, AT A LARGE RALLY HELD AT KUWAIT UNIVERSITY ON THE EVENING OF MARCH 12. THE RALLY WAS ORIGINALLY CALLED TO DISCUSS STUDENT BYALAWS AND THE SOACALLED "SENSATIONAL" DISCLOSURE WAS A "SURPRISE" USED SIMPLY AS ANOTHER TOOL TO EMBARRASS THE UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION, PARTICULARLY DEAN OF STUDENTS, SAIF ABBAS. THE "HANDLE" USED BY MUSA(ED WAS PILFERED CORRESPONDENCE INCLUDING AN UNCLASSIFIED DEPARTMENT CABLE DEALING WITH A CU/NEA AND EMBASSY KUWAIT RESPONSE TO A UNIVERSITY REQUEST TO PUT IT IN TOUCH WITH AMERICAN ACADEMIC ADVISORS WHO COULD ADVISE ON THE ORGANIZATION OF GRADUATE SCHOOLS AT KUWAIT UNIVERSITY. ON MARCH 15 ACCUSATIONS AGAINST U.S. WERE CLARIFIED BY AL

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PAGE 02 KUWAIT 01384 01 OF 02 151625Z

SIYASA, PLACING AMERICAN FACILITATIVE ASSISTANCE IN PROPER PERSPECTIVE. HOWEVER, INTERNAL FRICTION AT KU CONTINUES.

END SUMMARYM

1. SINCE LAST FALL INTERNAL STRIFE HAS BEEN SIMMERING AT KUWAIT UNIVERSITY BETWEEN TWO OPPOSING FACTIONS: THE KU ADMINISTRATION AND ITS SUPPORTERS VERSUS OPPONENTS OF THE

PRESENT RECTORM THE FIGHT IS A FAMILY AFFAIR AMOUNG KUWAITIS. THERE ARE ONLY 35 KUWAITI PROFESSORS AT KUWAIT OF A UNIVERSITY STAFF OF 400 PLUS. LAST SUMMER, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN KUWAIT'S 10 YEAR HISTORY, A KUWAITI WAS APPOINTED RECTOR. ALL PREVIOUS RECTORS HAVE BEEN EGYPTIAN. THE NEW RECTOR, HASAN AL IBRAHIM, IS A GRADUATE OF INDIANA UNIVERSITY. HE HAS APPOINTED TWO ASSISTANT RECTORS AND A DEAN OF STUDENTS WHO ARE ALSO AMERICAN UNIVERSITY GRADUATES. HIS OPPONENTS WITHIN THE FACULTY HAVE LEVELLED CHARGES OF "NEPOTISM", CENTRALIZATION AND ADOPTION OF DICTATORIAL METHODS. OPPOSITION FEELS FACULTY AUTONOMY NOT ONLY DISREGARDED BUT THAT RECTOR DELIBERATELY IGNORING SENIORITY IN HIS APPOINTMENTS.

2. AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT: UNTIL RECENTLY THE ARGUMENTS AT KU WERE DEBATED ACADEMICALLY IN THE PRESS WITHOUT EXCESSIVE EMOTION. IT IS NOW SUSPECTED THAT THE ANTI-ADMINISTRATION FACTION IN THE FACULTY IS EMPLOYING RADICAL ELEMENTS OF THE STUDENT BODY TO CARRY ITS FIGHT A STEP FURTHER. A LETTER FROM THE EMBASSY'S PAO ADDRESSED TO ADNAN SHEHABIDIN, AN ASSISTANT RECTOR DATED LAST NOVEMBER AND ENCLOSING AN UNCLASSIFIED CABLE (STATE 277149L LISTING NAMES OF AMERICAN DEANS CONTAINED IN A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF GRADUATE SCHOOLS TO CU/NEA, WAS PILFERED FROM UNIVERSITY FILES BY UNKNOWN CULPRIT AND OBTAINED BY KUWAIT STUDENT UNION EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN MUTLAQ MUSA'ED. THE BATORXSHEHAB-IDIN LETTER ALSO REFERS TO THE INTERNATIONAL EXECUTIVE SERVICE CORPS AND SUGGESTS UNIVERSITY OFFICIALS MAY WISH TO CONTACT KUWAIT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 KUWAIT 01384 01 OF 02 151625Z

BASED REPRESENTATIVE, RETIRED GENERAL WILLIAM RYDER, FOR ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE RE USE OF RETIRED AMERICAN ACADEMICIANS AS CONSULTANTS ON KU GRADUATE PROGRAMS.

EM ACCUSATION AND PRESS REACTION: MUSA'ED, IN A DELIBERATE DISTORTION, ACCUSED THE U.S.M OF TRYING TO TAKE OVER THE UNIVERSITYN DRAGGED IN THE CIA AND TALKED OF A MILITARY COUP. THE KUWAIT PRESS HEADLINED THESE DISTORTIONS, INVOLVING KISSINGER DIRECTLYN CLIPPINGS WILL BE SENT UNDER SEPARATE COVER. SINCE THE ORIGINAL DISCLOSURES WERE CARRIED IN THE ARAB LANGUAGE PRESS ON MARCH 14, IT WAS A FOREGONE CONCLUSION THAT THE KUWAIT TIMES WOULD PRINT AN EVEN MORE LURID VERSION ON THE FOLLOWING DAYM TO HEAD THIS OFF, PAO CONTACTED MUSTAFA ABU LIBDEH, POLITICAL ANALYST FOR AL SIYASA, AND SUGGESTED A TALK TO PLACE MATTERS IN PERSPECTIVE. SIYASA AND KUWAIT TIMES SHARE SAME PRINTING FACILITIES AND IT WAS ASSUMED LIBDEH WOULD FILL IN TIMES STAFF. MOREOVER, LIBDEH IS A GOOD USIS CONTACT WHO HAS BEEN RELIABLE AND OBJECTIVE IN THE PAST. WE

FELT HE WOULD HELP SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT. AN ASSUMPTION WHICH PROVED CORRECT. IN ADDITION TO BRIEFING LIBDEH ON THE BACKGROUND OF EMBASSY CONTACTS WITH KUN LIBDEH WAS GIVEN BROCHURES ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL EXECUTIVE SERVICE CORPS, RECEIVED FROM GENERAL RYDER WHO HAD BEEN PREVIOUSLY FULLY INFORMED OF DEVELOPMENTS. WITH RYDER(S) PERMISSION, WE ALSO GAVE LIBDEH THE GENERAL'S PHONE NUMBER AND SUGGESTED HE BE CONSULTED. LIBDEH DID PRECISELY THAT--HE CONTACTED ALL PARTIES CONCERNED, INCLUDING KUWAITIS INVOLVED WITH THE IESC, THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND KUWAIT UNIVERSITY OFFICIALS.

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PAGE 01 KUWAIT 01384 02 OF 02 151630Z
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INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SS-15 NSC-05
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-----151704Z 041858 /43

P R 151540Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7509
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 2 OF 2 KUWAIT 1384

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ON MARCH 15, AL SIYASA, BUT NOT THE OTHER ARAB LANGUAGE DAILIES CARRIED A COMPLETE STORY, PLACING ALL ALLEGATIONS IN THEIR PROPER PERSPECTIVE. THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF KU, IN A LETTER, STRONGLY DEFENDED CONTACTS WITH THE AMERICAN EMBASSY, OR ANY OTHER EMBASSY FOR THAT MATTER, IF IT WERE IN THE UNIVERSITY'S BEST INTEREST. LIBDEH PUBLISHED THE SECRETARY GENERAL'S LETTER IN FULL. HE PUBLISHED A LETTER FROM THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, AN ARABIC TRANSLATION OF THE BATOR/SHEHAB-IDIN LETTER AND A GOOD BACKGROUND STORY ON THE IESCM. IN ADDITION, LIBDEH WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN SEEING TO IT THAT THE KUWAIT TIMES PUBLISHED A COPY OF THE BATOR/SHEHAB-IDIN LETTER ALONG WITH THE CABLE CONTAINING INFORMATION SUPPLIED BY THE COUNCIL OF GRADUATE SCHOOLS --THE ALLEGED CONTACT BETWEEN

KISSINGER AND KUM FINALLY, LIBDEH NOTED IN AL SIYASA THAT IT WAS STANDARD PRACTICE FOR THE SECRETARY'S NAME TO APPEAR AT THE END OF ALL OUTGOING STATE DEPARTMENT CABLES.

4. REGRETTABLY THE KUWAIT TIMES, ALONG WITH AN ITEM CAPTIONED "CLARIFICATION AND REACTIONS", RAN A MIS-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 KUWAIT 01384 02 OF 02 151630Z

LEADING AND IRRESPONSIBLE FRONT PAGE STORY HEADLINED " "KISSINGER ATTEMPTED TO AMERICANISE KUWAIT UNIVERSITY...", ESSENTIALLY A REHASH OF ARAB PRESS ARTICLES OF THE PREVIOUS DAY. HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE THE "CLARIFICATION" ITEM WAS USEFUL IN BALANCING THE SENSATIONAL ARTICLE. BUT MORE IMPORTANT, SIYASA'S MARCH 15 TREATMENT OF THE AFFAIR WAS THOROUGHLY OBJECTIVE AND SHOULD ROB THE RUMOUR MILL OF ITS GRIST.

5. COMMENT: WE BELIEVE SOME OF THE STEAM HAS BEEN TAKEN OUT OF THE RADICAL ELEMENT AT KUWAIT UNIVERSITY WITH RESPECT TO TARRING THE AMERICAN IMAGE, BUT THIS WILL NOT PUT AN END TO INTERNAL BICKERING. THE STUDENTS AIM TO OUST THE DEAN OF STUDENTS AND FACULTY OPPOSITION STILL WANTS TO TOPPLE THE UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION. IT SHOULD ALSO BE NOTED THAT, ACCORDING TO DEAN SAIF ABBAS, RADICAL STUDENT MUTLAQ MUSA(ED, HAS HIMSELF SPENT SOME TIME IN MOSCOW. HOWEVER, WE ARE UNABLE TO VERIFY THIS REPORT OTHER THAN TO NOTE THAT MUSA(ED RETURNED TO KUWAIT LAST FALL AFTER PROLONGED ABSENCE ABROAD. POSSIBLE POLITICAL MOTIVATION FOR THIS ACTION SHOULD NOT BE EXCLUDED, ESPECIALLY SINCE, AMONG THE RESTRICTIONS PLACED ON STUDENTS BY THE NEW ADMINISTRATION, WAS ONE WHICH PROHIBITS STUDENT POLITICAL ACTIVITY ON CAMPUS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
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Disposition Approved on Date:
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Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977KUWAIT01384
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770088-1072
Format: TEL
From: KUWAIT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770359/aaaabzug.tel
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Litigation History:
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Office: ACTION CU
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
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Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3106326
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: U.S. RELATIONS WITH KUWAIT UNIVERSITY UNDER FIRE SUMMARY: ON MARCH QR THREE ARABIC DAILIES IN KUWAIT CARRIED STORIES ABOUT A "SENSATIONAL" DISCLOSURE
TAGS: PFOR, SEDU, US, KU, KUWAIT UNIVERSITY
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/5729f8b7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009